

s status was such as to give reasonable assurance of fidelity in the future. Believing, as I do, that the withdrawal, at any period after the rebellion commenced, of the prominent and leading men connected with it—principally those who held the reins of power, on whom its responsibilities mainly rested—would have restored peace to the sections, I cannot but accept the policy of both Presidents, as dictated by the soundest appreciation of the unmistakable drift of public sentiment, and the highest obligations of constitutional duty and practical statesmanship. To have refused words of kindness and encouragement to so large a class of our population, who are in the future, to constitute no inconsiderable part of our restored Union, and who had announced their willingness to renew their pledges of citizenship and loyalty, would have been a rebuke, damaging to our hopes of successful reconstruction. Could we invoke upon our misguided brethren, now that the rebellion is over, a more terrible retribution than that which their own madness has invited, in the self-condemnation of their high-handed treason against the best and freest government on earth, with the constantly recurring picture of their unnumbered slain—their desolated country—their charred and ruined cities, and their impoverished people, reduced to the last extremities of suffering and starvation? However great may have been the supposed risk attending this line of policy, President Johnson saw the importance of retaining the power in his own firm grasp, until reconstruction had been established upon the basis of universal emancipation, and the full recognition in every State, of the duty of paramount allegiance to the Federal Government.

But the total extinction of slavery was not the extreme demand growing out of the complications with which we were surrounded. A still more formidable issue remained to be disposed of. The policy of continuing the government of the Southern States in the hands of the Anglo Saxon race, began to assume shape and prominence in the threats held out by some, that no State should resume her former status in the Union, without a transfer of the political power which she had always exercised, to the control of the negro race. This was the practical effect of universal negro suffrage, as claimed by some of those who are now arrayed against the President's plan of reconstruction. In some of the Southern States, there was a preponderance of the colored population, while in others the balance was so nearly equalized, as to leave no doubt of their ultimate control under such a system. The transfer of a whole section—nearly a moiety of the national territory—to the dominating influence of a people distinct from our own—buried in the lowest depths of ignorance—was certainly no compliment to the loyal masses of the South, or the gallant army of white soldiers from the Free